

**ABSTRACT**

The present invention discloses a method and apparatus for tracking electronic mail (e-mail) that requires Internet Service Providers to use appliances registered with a central governmental agency. The appliance amends each e-mail message by attaching the serial number of the appliance and an identification code. The identification code includes information that can be used to reference log entries maintained on the appliance that can be matched to ISP records containing sender log-in information and sender connection records, thereby allowing each e-mail to be traced back to the originating ISP and sender. Receiving ISPs will be able to authenticate each ID code to ensure that the sending ISP has a registered appliance and to prevent the use of unauthorized appliances. This method/apparatus is intended to lay the groundwork for enforcing a National Do Not E-Mail registry.